

DISCOURSES
DELIVERED AT NOTRE-DAME DE QUEBEC
DURING THE
TRIDUUM
OF THE
SOCIETY OF ST.-VINCENT-DE-PAUL

ON THE 21st, 22nd & 23rd DECEMBER 1863

By the REV. THOMAS-AIME CHANDONNET.

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*Translated from the French.*  
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QUÉBEC

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INTRODUCTION.

His Lordship the Administrator of the Arch-diocese of Quebec was kind enough to grant to the Society of "St. Vincent de Paul," at Quebec, on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd December, a solemn *Triduum*, in which all the associates and all the friends of the work, were invited to give thanks to Almighty God for past graces and favours, and to pray for the requirements of the future.

The *Triduum* was preached by the Rev. Thomas-Aimé Chandonnet.

In his first discourse, the reverend gentleman referred to the origin of the Society, the most illustrious of its founders and its establishment in divers countries throughout the world, more especially in Canada; in the second, he exhibited the Society, first in its constitution, that is to say, in its object, its means, its members, its organization—then in the spirit that animates it; the third discourse pointed out the advantages offered by the Association of St. Vincent de Paul, to its members, to the poor, to Society itself.

The President of the Superior Council fervently prays that the abundant blessings of Heaven, which have just been showered upon the Canadian section of the society of

St. Vincent de Paul, at its very centre, may extend to each and every one of its affiliations throughout the Country, and impart to all, new strength and expansion. He firmly trusts that the omnipotent word of God will inspire every member of the Society with redoubled faith and charity.

Mr. Chandonnet having kindly consented to the publication of his discourses, we gladly present them, on behalf of the President of the Superior Council, to all the Brethren throughout the Province, to all friends of the work of Ozanam, to all who desire to know it and to love it.

Quebec, 1st January 1864.

By order,

C. NARCISSE HAMEL,
Secretary.

DISCOURSES
DELIVERED AT NOTRE-DAME DE QUÉBEC,
DURING THE TRIDUUM
of the Society de Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.

FIRST DISCOURSE.

*Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo, neque
lingua, sed opere et veritate.*

My little children, let us not love in
word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in
truth.

St John, I. Ep. chap. III. v. 18.

I.

My Lord,

Scarce thirty years ago, eight young students of Paris, where they number thousands, met together for the first time, in an obscure newspaper office situated in the humblest street of that vast city. I can see them still, gathered round a little table, and seated on wooden benches. Everything in their appearance indicates intellectual culture and generosity of soul. But their brows, despite the gaiety natural to youth, bear unmistakable traces of deep reflection and anxiety. One of them holds a paper on which lines had been written, mechanically and, as it were, by chance, two or three words, apparently the expression of their common thought.

But what may that thought be? For we can combine for evil as well as for good. What idea brings together those young men, so ardent and so anxious? Their chief, for they

have one, shall answer : “ we are inundated by a deluge of philosophical and heterodox doctrines, surging up every where around us ; we feel the desire and the necessity of strengthening our faith against the multiplied assaults directed against us by the various systems of false science. Amongst our fellow-students, some are materialists, some saint-simoniens, and some fourieristes ; others again deists. When we Catholics, attempt to remind these erring brethren of the wonders effected by Christianity, they invariably reply : “ You are right enough, if you speak of the past only, Christianity did wonders formerly ; but now Christianity is dead. And, in point of fact, what are you who boast of being Catholics, doing ? Where are the works that testify to your faith, and compel us to respect and acknowledge it ? ” They are right, he continues, the reproach is but too well merited. To the work, then ! Let our acts be in keeping with our faith ! But what is our work ? How shall we prove ourselves true Catholics, but by doing what is most pleasing to God ? Let us devote ourselves to the relief of our neighbour, as Jesus Christ did, and place our faith under the safeguard of Charity ! (1)

Catholic Faith and Charity ! Such, beloved brethren, is the motto adopted by these young crusaders. To preserve, to nourish mid the corrupt atmosphere of a great city, despite the pride of science, and the seductions of the world, the sacred flame of faith, the faith of their infancy, the faith of their youth, the sheet anchor of their mothers’ hopes ; to sustain that faith, not by words, not by ephemeral systems, but by works : by doing good to their unhappy brethren, to the “ poor people, ” to suffering humanity : such is their aim.

“ But what do you hope to accomplish ? ” exclaim their young companions. You are but eight poor youths ; and you undertake to relieve the swarming wretchedness of a city like Paris ! And even were you many times more numerous, you would accomplish but little after all ! Now, we are elaborating ideas and a system destined to reform the world, and rid it for ever of all suffering and misery, we shall perform in one instant for humanity, what you could not accomplish in many centuries. ” (2)

(1) Ozanam. Discourse at conference of Florence.

(2) Idem.

Poor youths! They had, no doubt, sincere and compassionate souls, but alas, deeply imbued in error. They knew not, beloved brethren, that one spark of faith and charity, does more than all the fires of the Earth, because it is a supernatural fire. You are but eight, they said. But they had yet to learn, that the sacred fire of Christian charity, communicates itself from one to another, more rapidly still than that flame which, too often, alas, devastates our great cities. In vain do the founders of this society, jealous of their treasure, strive to hide it, like the miser : for it is God who acts : *Deus est enim qui operatur*. (1) They were eight, at first ; two months afterwards, they were fifteen ; two years afterwards, they were one hundred ; twenty years afterwards, they were two thousand, in Paris alone ; visiting five thousand families, or about twenty thousand individuals, that is to say, one fourth of the poor enclosed within the walls of that immense city. (2)

How gladly, if it were possible, beloved brethren, would I proclaim, in unison with their successors, with the poor, with the true friends of humanity, the names of these first young men, who have become unwittingly, the patriarchs of a vast and powerful association, which, in the thirtieth year of its existence, is already bending under the precious burden of its works.

I cannot do so.—I know that the real creator of a work, is the person who originates the idea of it ; but I know no other here than God himself. How often, beloved brethren, have you not followed, through the country, enriched and beautified by its waters, the course of some great river, without discovering the source whence it springs ; God frequently does with the work of his servants, what he does with the works of physical nature : he disposes all things in such wise, that none but himself can, here below, I mean, be called its author. Thus it was with the new creation of Providence.

Nevertheless, I may well say with Lacordaire, that “ I shall not wrong the memory of any of these eight young men, by asserting that Ozanam, though their fellow-student, was the St. Peter of that humble cœnaculum. He never

(1) Phillipp. I. 13.

(2) Ozanam. Discourse at conference of Florence.

laid claim to that honour.....He was of the *eight*, a sufficient tribute to his memory; and if God made him the first among his peers, he also made him the first in death." (1)

II.

Since it is so, beloved brethren, let us turn our eyes, for a moment, on this good man, whose brow is radiant with the two fold halo of genius and of virtue; and who was the soul of our dear society of St. Vincent of Paul, next to God and the holy patron who protects it.

In 1840, the studious youth of France were challenged to compete at an examination, opened in the venerable sanctuary of Letters. Amidst the numerous and brilliant competitors, there appeared a youth whose look bespoke modesty, not unmingled with a slight degree of timidity and embarrassment. The struggle began. At once, our young friend calls up to his aid the resources at his command, viz : profound science and consummate tact. In vain does grudging fortune, which often laughs at the best founded hopes, compel the youthful victor, to prepare, in twenty four hours, an oral lecture on the most barren subject within the domain of letters. Fortune herself was baffled. Frederick Ozanam was crowned by the unanimous voice of the judges, and the public lavished upon him its sympathetic plaudits.

Every man has a mission, beloved brethren, you know it; for nothing is made without a purpose. The grain of sand even, has one, lost though it be amidst the waste of the desert. That mission must vary with the nature of the individual, and the circumstances in which he is placed; but there is infallibly a time when man's mission is being developed, within him; a time when it commences and manifests itself, a time when it completes its work and receives its crown. Ozanam had his developed in his youth, passed so rapidly in the calm of his laborious studies. Even there, we are told, he astonished his masters, yet more than his companions, leaving to all, together with the example of his noble

(1) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

qualities, precious reminiscences of his brilliant literary efforts: at the age of sixteen he wrote for the *Abeille*.

But he gave himself up, with still greater ardour to those serious studies which complete the youth and open for him the portals of manhood. Lacordaire could say of him at twenty, what it were desirable to say of all:—"Philosophy of a high order, while it opened to him the same views of mankind as faith itself, made him feel in his soul that harmony between revelation and the faculties, that harmony so omnipotent in expanding and invigorating the one by the other, which makes of the christian a philosopher, and of the philosopher a creature, proof against the pride of science as against the pride of virtue (4)."

At twenty Ozanam reached Paris.

The period in which a young man makes his first trial of unrestrained freedom is ever a critical, and frequently a fatal moment: for he who always does as he wishes, seldom does as he ought. (2) And thus it is that then his falls are neither few nor slight, for virtue and even for talent. But in Ozanam's day, yet more perhaps than in our own, the youth, whose timid eyes opened for the first time on a public career, was confronted by numerous and formidable enemies. The civil power erected into a tyranny; the political tribune insulting the sacred pulpit; the press given up to license in the name of liberty; the professor's chair become the working slave of falsehood; the sanctuary of science transformed into an arsenal of error; every where a devouring impiety heaping sarcasms and abuse on the past, in order to grasp the future for itself. A yawning abyss whose turbid waters were surging and seething for the ruin of Christ.

Ozanam confronted the abyss, confident, but pure, resolute and true. A soldier destined for the fight, he went, as though by instinct, to visit the generals who had preceded him on the battle field. Lacordaire pictures him to us, with delight, as he entered his room, and sat by his fireside for the first time; then, going on to knock, with a trembling hand, at the door of *one of the powers of this world*, as Charles the X, once styled M. de Chateaubriand. The latter had just returned from mass. He received the student, in an

(1) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

(2) Beauchêne. Life of Louis XVII.

amiable and fraternal manner ; and after many questions as to his projects, his studies, his tastes, he asked him, while examining him with a closer look, whether he proposed going to the play. Ozanam, in surprise, hesitated between the truth that he had promised his mother never to set his foot within the doors of a theatre, and the dread of appearing puerile in the eyes of his interlocutor. He remained silent for a time under the struggle going on within his soul. M. de Chateaubriand kept his eyes fixed on him the while, as though he attached great importance to his answer. At last truth triumphed ; and the author of *the Genius of Christianity*, bending down to embrace Ozanam, affectionately exclaimed : " I conjure you to follow your mother's counsel ; you would gain nothing by going to the theatre, and you might lose much. "

This advice remained vividly impressed on the mind of Ozanam ; and when any of his comrades, less scrupulous than himself, urged him to accompany them to the play, he met them with the decisive words : " M. de Chateaubriand told me it was not good to go there. " He went, for the first time in 1840, at the age of twenty-seven, to hear *Polyeucte*. He was not very deeply impressed by the performances. He experienced, like all men of sound taste and vivid imagination, that nothing can equal the representation that the mind forms to itself in a silent and solitary reading of the great masters. (1).

Allow me to give you, from the same source, another trait of a different kind, but which betrayed, still more forcibly, the noble mission marked out for the youthful Ozanam.

" At Sorbonne and the *college of France*, there were certain faculties highly esteemed by the young students, but which in treating of christianity were frequently wanting in justice and truth. Ozanam attended the courses most highly syoken of. Knowing how to appreciate merit, even in a enemy, he listened to all, but at one time with a countenance expressing pleasure, at another reserve. After taking his notes, he would return home, seek out the facts at their source, and rectify them ; then alone, in most instances, sometimes with friends, or even

(1) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

with young men unknown to him, whose signatures he solicited, he would write a serious and well-reasoned letter to the professor, pointing out his errors and conjuring him in a tone of holy simplicity, to repair the injury he had inflicted on the minds it was his duty to enlighten. M. Jouffroy received one day, a letter of the kind, signed *Ozanam, student*. He had felt the breath of God in his childhood ; and in fact, even before dying he was touched by returns of it, that entitled him, at least, to an honorable memory. Ozanam's letter touched him. It set forth, that many of the youths who attended his lectures were Christians ; and that it was extremely painful to them to see a man like him, eloquent, generous, and no doubt sincere, indulge in attacks upon their faith, to which they could not reply, since respect for order and for his person, condemned them to utter silence." In the course of the next lecture, M. Jouffroy informed his audience of the remonstrance he had received, praised the author for the sense of propriety, the learning he had exhibited ; then, with a degree of rectitude deserving of commemoration, he disavowed what he had stated to the prejudice of truth. (1).

But now, at last, your time is come oh ! holy truth, sacred faith of Christ, to take your revenge ! Ozanam, twice a doctor, victor at the grand examinations, master of almost all the modern languages, sits in the chair of science. He takes possession thereof at the age of twenty seven ; and for twelve years, in the very face of learned impiety itself, he attracted and captivated an immense auditory, poured forth floods of profane science, dissipated the clouds that obscured the light, proclaimed the honour of faith, and forced error to expiate its crime and relinquish the glory it had usurped.

Behold how truth becomes popular in his mouth ! The Easter of 1852 had passed. Ozanam lay in bed of a fever. He learns that his auditory are awaiting him at Sorbonne, and that those eager youths, heedless of the causes that deprive them of their professor, are calling for him in agitation and excitement. Instantly, despite the efforts of his friends, the tears of his wife, the commands of his physician, he rose up and hastened to his chair, saying : *I*

(1) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

must do honour to my profession. When he appeared in the hall of Sorbonne, pale, waste, and more like a corpse than a living man, the crowd were seized with remorse and admiration, and received him with overwhelming and frantic demonstrations of applause. These transports were repeatedly renewed, in the course of the lecture, and reanimating the unfortunate professor, already sinking under the fatal stroke of disease, thus lifted him above himself for one last effort. The audience seemed to possess the secret known to God alone, so passionate did their plaudits become when he closed his address as follows: "Gentlemen, our age is reproached with being an age of egotism, and your professors are said to be tainted with the universal epidemic of selfishness. Nevertheless, it is here that we waste our health, it is here that we consume our strength; I do not complain of this: our life is your's, your's to the very last breath, and you shall have it. For my own part, Gentlemen, should I die, it shall be in your service." Such was the last farewell of Ozanam, to an auditory who had loved and applauded him for twelve long years. (1).

A few days afterwards, he wrote with a feeble and trembling hand the first line of the canticle Ezechias: *I said in the midst of my days, I shall go to the gates of death.*

Man dies, beloved brethren! but he does not perish utterly. Ozanam's works tower above his grave like a monument. His name alone, remains the symbol of the successful alliance of science and faith, of genius and virtue. It is a note of defiance to impiety, enlightened as it sometimes is, often ignorant, but ever scornful. The name of Ozanam, side by side with the immortal names of Descartes, De Bonald, De Maistre, Ampère, Donoso Cortès, Biot, Cauchy, all learned, pious, and lay-men like himself, will prove once again to weak Catholics, to blind impiety, that true science and true faith, harmonise, that they ennoble each other; that genius is not incompatible with virtue, nor even with devotion itself: *that while a smattering of philosophy leads men away from God; an enlarged philosophy attaches men to Him, or leads them back to Him.*

I love to recall, O my God, the names of your learned

(1) Laeordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

and devoted servants. Nevertheless, I know it, you have no need of examples among men to authorise your Majesty. But in these days of doubt and universal distrust, extending even to your ministers, we need the alluring example of our fellow men to attract us to your standard. We seem to forget, beloved brethren, that the honour of an army depends especially on the chief and the flag ; that a brave soldier is none the less brave, though he be surrounded by cowards ; none the less faithful, though he stand alone in the breach. We forget, it would seem, that the service of God is ever honorable, though there remained but ten just men in each of our guilty cities. We forget, above all, that contempt will inevitably fall, in the first place, upon the vicious ; for vice itself will never esteem vice in others ; and next, upon those weak souls that flutter between good and evil ; we forget that in the inviolable sanctuary of conscience, the first place is ever awarded to the man who acts from conviction, openly and fearlessly, free alike from human respect and ostentation.

But I am not, beloved brethren, and I have no desire to be, an apologist. As a friend of the society of St. Vincent de Paul, which Ozanam founded in his youth, as an advocate of the poor, I *desire* to see in him, and I *can* see in him, no other title than that of a pious christian and a father in charity ; a pious christian devoting, each morning, half an hour to meditation upon some text of Holy Scripture, this was the first half hour of his day ; bending his knees in prayer before entering the lecture hall. A father in charity, who left the professor's chair, to seek out the poor in their wretched garrets, to enter into secret, noisome vaults, where timid misfortune hides its misery, having with him a loaf, a little crucifix, an image of Mary ; whose budget of charities, regularly prepared each year, exceeded one tenth of his income.

But, let us see him at work. " On the morning of New Year's day, 1852, " says his illustrious biographer, " the last New Year's day he saw in Paris, and the last but one " he spent in this world, he told his wife that a certain family were in great distress : that they had been forced " to pawn the chest of drawers that held the marriage " trousseau, their last remnant of former comfort and prosperity ; that he had a mind to redeem it, and present it to " them as a new year's gift. His wife urged plausible

“arguments against the plan, and he gave it up. In the evening, after returning home from his official visits, Ozanam seemed sad ; he cast a sorrowful glance upon the profusion of toys heaped before his little daughter, and would not taste the sweet-meats she offered him. He was evidently grieving for having missed the good work he had conceived in the morning. His wife having implored him to carry out his first thought, he sallied forth instantly to make the purchase of the chest-of-drawers, and after accompanying it himself to the dwelling of the desolate family, he returned to his home perfectly happy.”

Like all who occupy themselves in doing good, Ozanam was deceived sometimes. He had for a long period assisted an Italian, by purchasing his translations of which he had no need whatever. This person, for whom he had procured a situation, betrayed his employers, and when he again felt the pressure of want, he had recourse to the benefactor whose heart and whose door had ever been open to him. For the first time, Ozanam received him harshly, and refused him an alms. But the unfortunate man had hardly left the house when Ozanam's conscience was seized with remorse. He said within his heart, “it is never right to reduce a man to despair ; and we have no right to refuse a piece of bread, even to the vilest of criminals ; perhaps I myself may one day have need that God should be less inexorable to me, than I have just shown myself towards a fellow-creature redeemed by his blood.” Overcome by these thoughts, he followed the unhappy wretch, running the whole way until he overtook him, opposite the Luxembourg, and gave him with an alms, a proof of his repentance and of his charity”. (1)

This glance at the life of Ozanam, beloved brethren, brings my lips, to a word which is not out of place in the sacred pulpit, nor foreign to this numerous assembly. It is the lay apostolate, the apostolate of the man of the world. You know what I mean, beloved brethren, by lay apostolate, I understand that which is exercised, not at the altar but at the holy table ; not in the tribunal of penance, but in the confessional ; not in the sanctuary, but in the midst of the temple ; not in the sacred pulpit, but in the public forum : the apostolate of word against word, press against

(1) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

press, work against work. This apostolate belongs, not to the priest, it belongs to the world, to each and all of you, beloved brethren, without a single exception. But, allow me to insist upon it, this apostolate belongs to you, above all, who share in the apostolate of evil, ardent youths, and men in the maturity of age and power. I would address myself to both classes, but more particularly to the former, in an discourse devoted to an association of charity, formed by young men, and I will say, for the honour of youth. And at the outset, I maintain, despite the reproaches youth may have earned for itself, and all that Bossuet may have said of the youth of his time in particular, I maintain that it is a truth as certain as it is consoling, youth can and must have its share in the great mission of good, which is carried on in the world. For if youthful nature be prolific for vice, it is also prolific for virtue. The young have the daring, the fire, and the enthusiasm of evil, but they have also the daring, the fire, and the enthusiasm of good. The young commit faults, no doubt; but if they be not an utter wreck before reaching manhood, they sometimes have the candour to blush for them, frequently the frankness to confess them, and almost invariably, a heart to weep for them. At the opening of a worldly career, man is surrounded with hopes, assailed by enchanting illusions; but with a vigorous and ardent nature, he is armed for the sacrifice. And is it not in youth that the painful work of conversion is most frequently accomplished? Is it not in youth that man renounces the world, like St. Bernard, and prostrate at the foot of the altar takes God for his soul's inheritance? Is it not then that man embraces the austerity of the cloister, with a Louis or a Stanislas? Do we not behold the youthful missionary bidding farewell to country, mother and sister, and with open arms crying out to the children of the forest: Ye are my brothers and my sisters! Oh! brethren, this is courage, or it is no where to be found.

Nevertheless, I say it to all, to the full grown man, as well as to the youth, courage is no longer sufficient to enable you to walk steadfastly in the footsteps of these noble christians, whose names I have just mentioned. No, in this age of frivolity, of doubt, of egotism and of apostacy, he who would not be false to true honour, must arm himself with the strong convictions resulting from the union of science and virtue; and with the generous sword

of sacrifice. Without this, you may earn a reputation for talent, sometimes, in fact, for sincerity ; but never will you render virtue, nor even your own name, truly and solidly, popular. With this firm conviction of the mind, and this generosity of the heart, you may govern the world ; you will have good at your command, and confront evil with an impenetrable and invincible array. With this conviction of mind, and this generosity of heart, you, man of the world, will sometimes do more for the cause of good, than the man of the sanctuary, or the man of the cloister. Why is this ? It matters little why. It is perhaps because the spectacle of virtue in the midst of Israel is more rare, and consequently more striking. No doubt, there is fanaticism, in cheerfully bidding a final farewell to the world, in order to devote one's self to the pursuit of virtue and perfection, but a *legitimate* fanaticism, a *generous* fanaticism, a *sublime* fanaticism, before which the good young man of the Gospel drew back, despite the invitation of Jesus Christ himself. Now this it is, perhaps, that makes virtue in a layman, appear, in some sort, disinterested and more attractive. Moreover, there is a contagion of virtue, as there is a contagion of vice, or of disease ; and in the midst of the world, where the elements are more similar, and therefore more sympathetic, virtue is naturally more expansive and more contagious.

III.

When we parted from the little association of Paris students, in order to follow Ozanam, it had not yet left its humble cradle ; the thought of a further extension of its organisation had never been entertained. But ere long, necessity itself, or rather the hand of God, while preserving unbroken the link of charity that made them one in heart and spirit, dispersed abroad these first apostles. And this was but the exercise of a just right : it was God's own work. The idea conceived by these eight young students of Paris, was borne on the wings of charity, from one land to another, as the seed of the flower is borne on the wings of the dove, wafted by the wayward breeze, or floats on the bosom wave that seeks a distant shore. It fell on a fertile soil ; and nursed by the fostering dew of heaven it budded forth, struck its roots deep into the earth ; and soon shot high into

the air, and the strong and ample branches from its stem afforded shelter, not to the birds of the air, but to the poor of the earth.

Thus it was, beloved brethren, that the society of St. Vincent of Paul, of Paris, where we have seen the establishment of the first conference, spread throughout the whole of France; passed into Germany, then into Belgium, then into Denmark; crossed the Pyrenees and the Alps; visited Greece; crossed the British channel; organised its Conferences in the Netherlands, in Switzerland and in European Turkey; trod the sacred soil of Asia; braved the burning sun of Africa; explored Oceanica and reached America. Thus three fourths of the world were enrolled in this crusade of charity. To-day it may be said of this charitable association, as was said of the vast dominions of Charles-Quint: "*The sun never sets on this empire.*"

O blessed fecundity of the works of God! Man and his work pass away together; and as man succeeds man, so do the works of man pass away in succession. But the work of God is immortal; for God himself does not pass away: his grace, which is himself, gives to all that it inspires, to all that it penetrates, to all that it animates, the seeds of immortality.

But let me hasten to state, beloved brethren, for this is the characteristic sign of the works of God, that the Church received, with the affection, nay with the weakness, the fondness of a mother, this child of charity, this offspring of the purest spirit of christianity. In 1845, prostrate at the feet of Gregory XVI, the society was loaded with the choicest blessings from the Sovereign Pontiff. By a brief, dated the 10th of January, of the same year, he signified his approval of the new society, confirmed it in its special form and constitution; thus placing it in the ranks of the regular institutions working in the great catholic world.

More than one hundred bishops have raised their voices in its favour. From every episcopal throne and from every pulpit, words of encouragement have been showered upon it.

In 1852, at the simple request of the society itself, the Holy Father granted it a protector in the person of H. E. Cardinal Fornari.

Nevertheless, beloved brethren, the consecration of the society of St. Vincent de Paul, whose birth sounded the death knell of triumphant impiety, would have been in

some sense imperfect, had not Pius IX also imparted to it, amidst the tribulations of the times, his paternal benediction. Surely the society can never forget, how, amid the imposing ceremonies attending the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Pius IX deigned to remember it, to offer the holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the intention of its members, gave them Holy Communion with his own hand, and presided in the hall of the consistory at a general meeting of the Conferences of Rome. You will doubtless recollect with pleasure, beloved brethren, that the society in Canada, was represented on that memorable occasion. His Holiness listened with kindly interest to the report of its humble labors, and crowned all by addressing the brethren, himself. He reminded them of the noble end proposed to itself by the society; urged all the members to labour for that end with energy and perseverance; then, in the outpouring of his heart, invoked a divine blessing upon them all, adding in conclusion: "May this blessing accompany you, all the days of your life; may it extend to those who cooperate in works of charity in Rome, in Italy, in Europe, and throughout the whole world."

It would weary you, beloved brethren, to enumerate the circumstances attending the emigration of the successive colonies of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and their installation in the various countries I have just mentioned. But their birth, on the fertile soil of Canada is certainly entitled to a special commemoration. Happily I am in a position to give you the very words of the prelate chosen by Providence to impart a first blessing, and to be the first to cultivate this precious offshoot of the tree of Charity. His Lordship the administrator of the diocese, during his visit to Europe in 1850, when presiding at a general assembly of the Conferences of Paris, which was attended by an illustrious friend of the society, P. Lacordaire, spoke as follows:

"A young man, after completing his studies in Paris, brought with him to Canada a copy of your rules. He called upon a priest of Quebec. That priest was myself, who now address you. He unfolded to him his plan of establishing the society in Quebec. The priest encouraged him, mentioned the matter from the pulpit, called a meeting; and that was sufficient in a country so catholic as Canada. Several conferences were at once organized.

How admirable are the dispositions of divine Providence! This was in 1846, when two vast conflagrations had just destroyed two thirds of the city. You are aware of the dreadful severity of our winters. The alms of the conferences, amounting within one year to 25,000 francs (5,000 dollars), sufficed for every necessity ; and every needy sufferer found a brother to console him."

Oh! may it ever be so, beloved brethren. Let us never allow the fire of Catholic Charity to cool in our hearts. Like this young man of Paris, let us unite all our forces, let us associate our hearts in a charitable conspiracy for the relief of our brethren, the suffering members of Jesus Christ. To the taunts from the lips of the impious, let us reply with our hearts, with our works. These alone, now as ever, can give a meet answer to those who ask the Catholic: *where is your God?* These alone can proclaim in unmistakable terms: "Their God is in heaven ; and he doeth all things whatever he wisheth." And should we, like Ozanam, be honored with a call to do battle in the front rank of the army of Christ, let us never forget that a Catholic officer, if he be really worthy of that title, must take the lead by a scrupulous fidelity in executing the commands of his general. He will give edification by his devotion to prayer, his attendance at the Holy Sacrifice, and by approaching the Holy table. In fine, beloved brethren, let us have a real love for God, a real love for his Church, a real love for the good principles that come from God ; then, in the spirit of the Gospel, combining this sincere love of God with the sincere love of our neighbour, we shall not only speak of him, of the people, of the poor ; but yet more, and above all, we shall do them good ; we shall not profit of their misery, we shall relieve them *Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.*

SECOND DISCOURSE.

Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo, neque
lingua sed opere et veritate.

My little children, let us not love in
word, nor in tongue, but in deed and
in truth.

St. John, I. Ep. Cap. III. v. 18.

I.

My Lord,

With the blessing of God, we shall, this evening, examine the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 1st. in its constitution ; that is to say, in its end, its means, its members, its organisation ; and, 2ndly. in the spirit which animates it.

The Sacred Scripture lays down a principle for the exercise of charity, which has been adopted, in divers forms, in the peculiar language of every Christian people. Amongst us it is embodied in the axiom : *Charity begins at home.*

That maxim is a sound one, no doubt ; but, as it only too often happens with general principles, it is many a time lost sight of, in the multiplied details of practice, or in the unaccountable manner our poor minds find the means of abusing things, in themselves the most perfect. Thus, either by a too weak civility, on the one hand, we sacrifice everything, and give up everything to our fellow men, under pretext of pleasing, serving and saving him, but alas, to our mutual destruction ; or, on the other hand, through an opposite excess, we grasp everything for ourselves, and refuse everything to others, and this under the name of charity.

Look at the miser, for instance, while he is hoarding up and increasing his treasure, lamenting his present straightened circumstances, or casting an uneasy glance into the dark

future, do you not hear him exclaim? "The times are hard, I must save up, misery is at every door, I must ward it off in time; alas! it is as much as I shall be able to accomplish; let others have the pleasure of giving: *Charity begins at home!* The egotist devours with his covetous eyes all that surrounds him. He fancies that men and things are created for him alone; everything is laid out for his interests. Self! self! is his eternal cry: *Charity begins at home.* Another says: "I am neither a miser nor an egotist; but I would not be a prodigal. My means are sufficient for the requirements of my position; but, most undoubtedly, the requirements of my position are equal to my means. I cannot strip myself to clothe others." Such is the language of an easy cool and alas! but too common indifference: *Charity begins at home.*

Thus it is, my brethren, that charity would become the abyss, into which man rashly and hopelessly plunges body and soul, to serve his fellow man; or else a matter of keen and interested calculation, beginning invariably with self, without ever ending in others.

Now, I tell you, my brethren, that the true christian spirit is equally distant from both these extremes. For it begins at home: but thence, or rather without going forth from thence, it is generously poured forth upon all others. It is a fire in its own hearth; it warms that hearth first, and then darts its cheering rays upon every one around. Christian charity is like Divine charity: it is egotistical if you will; but, at the same time, essentially diffusive. *Charitas incipit a semetipso—Charitas benigna est, non est ambitiosa.*

To this well ordered charity, correspond, as the effect to the cause, several kinds of good, which custom designates as: one's own good and the good of others, private good and the public good. It is with these as with charity itself: they are distinct, but not in reality separable: they go hand in hand, they are linked together. God is the good of all, and the world also. To will good aright, is to will it as it is, and consequently to will it for all, for ourselves and for others, for others and for ourselves. By this single and upright willing of a double good, we merit, we acquire the right to a reward, which we shall certainly receive. Behold here, our own good resulting alike, from charity to self and charity to others.

Greatly indeed are we deceived, beloved brethren, if we imagine that charity acts outwardly without burning inwardly, or burns inwardly without acting outwardly ; that it can effectually promote public good, whilst it neglects individual interests, or advances private interests while neglecting the public good of others.

This is not all. Charity has always to deal with two orders of good : Spiritual good ; Moral good,—the good of the soul, and material good, physical good, the good of the body. Charity if it be real, if it be christian, will make choice of the better part, that is of the spiritual ; it will subordinate the less noble, to the more noble, as God himself has rightly done.

Hence, my brethren, a well ordered charity embraces first *self*, but without excluding others ; others, without excluding self ; the spiritual, the moral, ever taking precedence over the material, over the physical. Such is the oracle of eternal wisdom, the christian spirit, the catholic spirit, the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul.

Such also, thank God, is the charitable policy proclaimed by the eight young students of Paris. To convince you of this, let me give you Ozanam's own words : " Our principal aim " said he, in addressing the brethren of Florence, " our principal aim was not to afford help to the poor, No. Our aim was to maintain ourselves firmly in the faith, and to propagate it amongst others, through the medium of charity. We also wished to have an ever ready answer when at any time we should be asked, in the words of the Psalmist : *ubi est Deus eorum* ? where is their God.

This, then, is their object ; in the first place, their own good, their own souls, their virtue, their faith, jointly with the good, the souls, the virtue and the faith of others ; then the exaltation of that faith in the eyes of all. The means of attaining that end, are all comprised in the word charity.

The means that charity furnishes are many. In this world, as in eternity, charity can, and really does, accomplish all things ; but the special means that it affords to the brethren of Ozanam, consist primarily in the association itself, their spiritual intercourse, that fraternal union, the intimacy of their social life. For this, once in each week, the society assembles all its members throughout of its vast empire. There, they pray together, they listen to an edifying

lecture, and converse with unreserved confidence. It has also its more general, but equally intimate gatherings ; the four yearly festivals and indulgences : the love feasts of former days. There also the poor are spoken of, and named as the cherished friends of the family, their places of abode are enquired for, the members eagerly sharing among themselves the duty and the pleasure of visiting them at an early day.

In fact the visiting of the poor in their hovels, in their cellars, in their garrets is precisely the second essential means for attaining the object of the Society. These visits, ever made, as they are, in the spirit of faith, establish, in some sort, between the disciple of St. Vincent de Paul and the poor, the intimate relations existing between the members themselves : acquaintance, conversation, prayer in common, reciprocal interest and gratitude ; the relations of the mind and of the heart.

Jesus-Christ tells us in Holy Scripture, that *man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that falleth from the mouth of God* (1). Yes, my brethren, man undoubtedly lives by the life of Grace : it is the essential aliment of his sublime nature, of his soul. And for that reason, it is repugnant to God, repugnant to man, cruel, shameful to sell or to purchase the virtue, the conscience, the honour, the sublime life of the poor man, in exchange for the vile sustenance of his inferior nature.

Nevertheless, man lives also of bread ; and though the poor frequently suffer the want of it, they are in the same degree as the rich, subject to this law of our perishable nature. But this material bread, far from being an agent of moral corruption, should, while nourishing the body, be finally subservient to the soul. Hence, the companions of Ozanam, in the highest interest of man, have wisely made the material bread that nourishes the poor man's body, subserviant to the bread of faith, by which the just liveth. A charitable, a noble, a consoling policy this !

The visit made to the poor by the disciple of St. Vincent, in the name of faith, is therefore generally accompanied by a material alms. But, mark it well, my brethren, it is not

(1) Matth. IV. 4.

the visit that follows the alms ; but the alms that follows the visit.

It may well happen, alas ! that you lack means to assist your suffering fellow-man ; but the glance of compassion, the consoling word, those little attentions that can charm him and win him to God, are always at your command. This is certainly enough to render your visit thoroughly efficacious for good, which is the main point. Is it not worth while making the visit in order to accomplish this ?

Besides, my brethren, no one work of charity is foreign to the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, provided only it can be made subservient to the maintenance, the propagation, the honour of the Catholic Faith. Take, for instance, the patronage of orphans. The Society gathers up, in the name of Providence, these poor little creatures, whom Providence has adopted by depriving them of their mothers. It places them in christian hands, provides for their food and clothing, and never relaxes its supervision, until the child has grown up into the man. In a similar manner, the Society undertakes, on occasion, the patronage of students, the patronage of apprentices, the patronage of mechanics, the patronage of laborers.

I believe I have indicated, my brethren, the true end and means employed by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I wish it were now in my power to imprint them, in indelible characters, in the mind of every member, of every friend, of every enemy, if there be any in the world, of this beneficent society. But it behoves the brethren of the Society, above all others, to know and to bear in mind, that the object, the end of their association, is their own sanctification in the Catholic Faith, the propagation of that faith amongst others, especially the poor, the honoring of that same faith in the eyes of all ; and not merely the visiting of the poor, or the distributing of alms, as it is but too often imagined. No : the gatherings of the brethren, the prayers in common, the festivals, the domiciliary visits to the poor, the alms, whatsoever they may be, are not in any sense the object, not in any sense the end, of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul ; they are but the means, they are subordinate to the end ; they conduce to the end ; but they are not the end itself. Therefore, he who confines his intention to the visit, to the alms, or to the other means of the Society, without directing them to the maintenance, the

propagation, or the honour of the Catholic Faith, fails to seize the essential point of his duty as a member. In point of fact, he is not a member : for in order to be really a member, it is not sufficient to have the name, and then to seek any end one choses ; there must be a community of action for a common purpose, a mutual cooperation in working out the real end of the association, and it must be worked out by the means that are appointed : as being conducive to that end, for in this consists the essential point of all association : where there are two ends, two means, there must be two societies. If you are ignorant of the end, if you forget it, or if you merely confound it with the means ; if worse do not come if it, you will certainly reap no benefit from the advantages afforded by the Association, and you will injure the Society ; with the best intention in the world, you will spoil everything, or else you will act with the hesitation and weakness of chance.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, let me repeat it to you again : you are members of this Society, above all for yourselves, to nourish Catholic Faith in yourselves in the first place, next to nourish it and to glorify it in others. And, as nothing can be done without means, you adopt two principal and essential means : familiar gatherings of your brethren ; and domiciliary visits of the poor, combined with alms.

I assert that these means are essential : for in this as in everything else, *he who wills the end, wills the means.*

Disciples of St. Vincent de Paul, brethren of Ozanam, would you be really worthy of the name ? Fix your eyes upon the triple end laid out by them for themselves and for you ; your own faith in the faith of others, particularly of the poor ; the exaltation of the Catholic Faith. Next, adopt the means of attaining it, but adopt them effectually. Attend your meetings, take part in the festivals, take advantage of the indulgences, visit the poor at their houses, and let your alms go with you.

Then, the sight, the thought, and the zeal of the end, will determine, penetrate and animate all your words and all your proceedings. Let each associate do this, and behold you are a real army, never scattering, never betraying its own forces, but combining them in a single phalanx, that will obtain its end with the energy of omnipotence.

I need hardly say now, that a member of the Society of

St. Vincent de Paul is in the wrong, when at the hour of meeting he says to himself: "What need of attending? there are no poor to relieve...." But my dear brother, it is your own virtue, your own faith that are to be restored, animated by that union which is strength, by combined prayer, by fraternal edification! The poor have bread, say you?....So much the better! But you yourself are the first of the poor: therefore, you must look first to yourself. Go then, go, my brother, and receive the fire of faith at the hearth of charity. "But it is useless visiting the poor; I have nothing to give them." So much the worse! Have you not even the widow's mite, which Jesus Christ made so much of? Then you are unfortunate indeed; more unfortunate in not being able to give, than the poor in not receiving. What if it be the visit itself, the visit alone, that you are called upon to make? If the alms be only an accessory? But the poor are always in need of the bread of faith; and they need consolation all the more, from the fact that you are unable to relieve their poverty. Go then, go my brother; and let your presence, your kind words, your assiduity, at least, help to moderate their deepest sufferings, the sufferings of the soul."

But, my brethren, who are those whom the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, calls upon to enrol themselves under its banner of Charity? This banner, with its noble motto, has been unfolded in the cause of good against evil, in the midst of the world, in the heart of a great city, where evil abounds side by side with good; there, in the midst of the world, it must remain. This banner, with its noble motto, has been unfolded, not by an association of men of mature age, devoted to solitude, prayer and silence, to whom Jesus Christ, recommends when out of the sanctuary, the prudence of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. No, no, it has been unfolded by young men of the world, young students of the world, breathing, speaking, acting in the very midst of the struggle, with no other title, no other mission than that of Christians and Catholics, but Catholics enlightened and sincere. It is for you then, Catholic youth, for you, in a special manner, to support this banner, to surround it, to be its guard of honor. It is your right; why would you not conclude; "Then it is our duty."

You, above all others, can and should shelter, within its deepest folds, your Catholic faith, your priceless virtue, so

frequently and so violently assaulted ; and then march forward to the rescue and the defense, of the virtue and the faith of others, with a frankness and a courage worthy of so noble a flag.

Nevertheless, beloved brethren, the Society does not exclude laymen of a more advanced age. Oh ! no : it welcomes them joyfully ; and even urges them to swell the ranks of their juniors : they form a large proportion of its members. And indeed mature age, too, needs to renew the fervour of its faith, by approaching the fireside of fraternal charity ; and though it may contribute less ardor and enthusiasm in action, it compensates for that deficiency by a larger share of prudence and discretion.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is no doubt happy to count amongst its ranks, members of the clergy. A submissive child of the Church, since it is essentially Catholic, it derives its principle, its life, from the very source of Catholicity, reposing ever under the protection of the pastoral staff. It enjoys a protector in the person of a prince of the Church, a chaplain in every land where it raises its peaceful standard ; it offers to all the members of the clergy the exceptional title of " honorary members. "

Nevertheless, my brethren, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, essentially, practically catholic, is peculiarly a lay society, lay in its origin, lay in its founders, lay in its constitution, lay in its members, in its spirit, in its movements, in all its proceedings, which does not, I repeat, prevent it from being truly and supremely Catholic.

I do not hesitate, as you see, my brethren, to bring together and yet distinguish, these three words : Catholic, priest, layman. At certain periods and in certain parts of the world, one would fancy that the priest and the layman were no longer both catholics. The priest is a priest ; the layman a layman : they are two separate orders ; and the word catholic no longer unites all the tribes of God's people ! Oh ! my beloved brethren, the priest, I know, is not a layman ; the layman is not a priest. But both alike are Christians, both alike are catholics, both are children of the Church, and in virtue of that title, they differ in nothing, they cannot differ in any sense, inasmuch as they are stamped with the same seal ; and if both be sincere, they will have the same rights, the same duties, the same interests, the same affections, the same sympathy, the same

spirit, the same heart. Oh ! let us learn then, my brethren, to unite, to distinguish even, if you will, but never to separate, two things so utterly inseparable. Catholics, in the first place, all ; then catholic priests, catholic laymen. In a like sense I say, passing from the religious to the civil order, (bearing in mind the while, that we are citizens of the Church before becoming citizens of the state, and that we are ever and always catholics, no matter what may be our rank in the social scale) I say it frankly, in theory as in practice : we are citizens, in the first place, all ; then clerical citizens, then lay citizens. This is the true view, which all do not adopt, perhaps, but which all ought to adopt. And this is the view adopted by the association formed by the young students of Paris. Catholics in spirit and in heart, and catholic laymen,—they undertook a crusade essentially catholic, but specially secular, wherein, the layman acts spontaneously, undertakes, follows up, and accomplishes his good work in perfect freedom.

Be not astonished, therefore, brethren of Ozanam, if in this crusade of charity, the clergy abandon to you the vast field of good, and the blessed freedom of well doing. The clergy have their own high mission, at home first, then on foreign shores, and even in the wild depths of the forests ; but beneath the standard of Ozanam is your's. Under Ozanam's flag, your's be the glory of the onset, of the strategy, of the fight, the victory and the crown.

But, what is needed in order to be a true disciple of St. Vincent de Paul ? Every disciple of St. Vincent de Paul must, above all be a Catholic ; for how can it be possible when one does not possess the faith, to undertake to nourish it in oneself or in others ? For a similar reason, I would willingly divide all Catholics, in relation to this society into two classes : its friends, and its members. Its friends can be, and ought to be as numerous as the Catholics themselves. We every one of us, without exception, owe to this Society, which labours for our faith under the banner of Christian Charity, our esteem, our love, and our protection. We ought to esteem it, for it is good ; to love it, for it is generous ; to protect it, for it labours for good. If these good sentiments be real, they will exhibit themselves in their effects. We shall then speak well of this work, we shall encourage it. And moreover, though not being members of the association, simply as friends of the Society,

and of the poor, it is in our power, and in fact we are invited to add, each year, a special alms to those of its members, that is to say, to become *subscribers* to the fund it maintains for the benefit of the poor ; in this way we shall share largely in the good it effects, and in the spiritual advantages which the Church bestows abundantly upon the members themselves.

The members of the Society, on the other hand, are required, to do far more than its friends or its subscribers. As disciples of St. Vincent de Paul, and intimate friends of Ozanam, they must be imbued with the Christian spirit that animated those two heroes of faith and charity ; they must be practical Catholics. It is not necessary to be perfect, certainly, in order to be of the brotherhood of Ozanam, but it is indispensably necessary to possess a real and ardent love for one's own soul, an esteem for virtue, the care of one's faith, and a zeal for the faith of others. Without this, it is impossible to do honour to the title of member, and to the flag of the Society. A man who will neither keep nor acquire money has no business entering into a commercial association, or financial speculation. He has no zeal for attaining the end ; consequently he has no zeal for adapting the means to that end : he is feeble, he is dead.

But every man who is really and sincerely Catholic, or who is, at least, really anxious to become so, who is in a position to comply with the other essential requirements of the Society, namely, attending the meetings and visiting the poor, and able to set aside a part for their benefit, not a large sum, but even the mite ennobled by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, is invited to enrol himself under the noble banner of Ozanam, and to mark upon his breast the sacred sign of charity. He will find in that association, special facilities for labouring more effectually for the good of his own soul, and for the good of the souls of others.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has its honorary members, and its active members ; but, as regards Catholicity and virtue, I make no distinction between these two classes of members. They must have the same love, the same zeal for this common end, and consequently the same love, the same zeal for the means whereby it is to be attained. For they are all in reality members of the same society. The honorary members are not required to assist at the little weekly meetings, called *conferences*, nor to visit

the poor at their houses ; but they make up for being unable to labour in person, by contributing more liberally towards the funds of the Society. This is an essential condition.

But, they are in precisely the same position as the active members, as to attending the general meetings held every three months, sharing in the observance of festivals, and gaining the indulgences of the Society.

Every association, whatsoever may be its end, its means, or its members, needs a hand of union to combine the scattered actions of its associates, in order to apply them to its means, and to bring them to bear effectually upon the object of the Society. Without this moral bond, you may have meetings, gatherings, crowds ; but a society ! never. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, like every other, comes under this moral law. It requires an authority, a hierarchy, not necessarily despotic, not absolute, but capable of governing the social body. This hierarchical authority it does in fact possess, as we shall this see more clearly by taking a rapid glance at its organisation.

In the first place, as the basis of all, is the little weekly assembly, styled the *Conference* ; for this was the title adopted, after the example of other societies its contemporaries whether for good or evil, by the association of Paris students. These meetings, which must be held at least once a fortnight, are really the seat of the active life of the Society. It is in the conference that the members unite in prayer and edifying lectures ; that they encourage one another to labour in the good work ; that the wants, of the poor are discussed ; that the duty of visiting them is apportioned ; that the alms afforded by the little treasury are regulated. Then, in the interval of the conferences, each member visits the families entrusted to him, thus sowing and gathering in his share of good, for the love feast of the following week. The conferences are established wherever the society exists. In Quebec alone, there are eighteen, each of them holding regular weekly meetings.

In order to unite them, and give them all an uniform direction, each central position has its council, called the *Particular Council*.

The several Particular Councils of each province, with their respective groups of conferences, centre in another council, called the Superior Council. The Superior Council

of Canada meets, as you are aware, in Quebec. In fine, all the provincial sections, that is to say, the entire society, obey the supreme direction of the General Council, which meets in Paris, the birth-place of the Society.

M. Billault in one of his able discourses in the French Senate, said, with reference to the organisation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul: " Its organisation, it cannot be denied, is extremely powerful, and the more so from the fact that by means of the very benefits it renders, the Society exercises its influence in every direction, over all classes : over the upper classes by its prayers, by the assistance it obtains ; over the lower classes, by its counsels, by the practice of its charitable works, which are multiplied under every form, and which place in its hands, the apprentice, the work man, the soldier. Elsewhere, he says : At the head of an organisation displaying immense energy, was found a hierarchy possessed of extraordinary vitality and activity. "

There is something of truth, my brethren, in these words : the organisation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is powerful ; and how can this be made a subject of reproach in an association exclusively devoted to doing good ? But the able minister, despite his high sagacity, did not seize the real secret of that strength.

II.

The strength of an organised body, of what nature soever that body may be, whether physical or moral, resides in its soul far rather than in its organs. It is the life that animates a body, that moves it, that makes it act ; and the life of a body is its soul, its spirit. It is therefore in its soul that we must seek for the strength of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Now, my brethren, the triple spirit that animates that Society and renders it so powerful, is the spirit of fraternity, of humility, and above all the spirit of action.

A spirit of fraternity, that animates its very authority itself. In the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, there exists no doubt an authority, which directs, which governs : without this, there could be no Society ; but which does not *command*. Read the circulars issued by the General

Council to the whole Society, or by the inferior Council within this respective jurisdictions, you will never find a word of command, but simply a counsel, an exhortation, a prayer.

As to the members themselves, they are styled brethren, and in truth, the word is well applied. "How I am overwhelmed with joy," cried Ozanam, at a meeting of the conferences of Florence, "to meet, at this distance from my country, so many brothers loving one another with a common affection, and forming but one family! Once on the occasion already have I experienced a similar emotion in England, and quite recently again in Castile, where a small number of friends received me in a little room. But I can assure you, that, though small the room, great was the charity that warmed the hearts of its occupants! It found expression in looks, in words, and in the grasp of the hand! I am deeply touched at the fraternal spirit that animates and imparts life to the conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, every where alike, even in countries the most dissimilar and the most remote. And I am powerless to express to you, how sweet it is to me to find it here as I found it at Genova, at Livourne and in the other parts of Italy."

There are in this world, my brethren, two sorts of hypocrisy? the hypocrisy of good, and the hypocrisy of evil. It is hypocrisy to dress ourselves up in a virtue of which we possess little or nothing, as it is hypocrisy to boast of a vice to which we are little, if at all, addicted; it is as hypocritical to boast falsely of evil deeds, as to boast falsely of good actions. These two species of hypocrisy are from pride, though the wicked, through a secret hatred for real virtue pretend to entertain a special contempt for the hypocrisy of virtue. But whatever may be said of it, these two kinds of boastful lying, are equally hypocritical, hypocrisy is the off-spring of pride, pride itself, is ever a hypocrite. The opposite of pride is humility. I do not mean servility, much less, baseness; I mean humility. Humility is truth. Humility does not raise a man up; nor does it lower him. It keeps him in his place before God and before man.

Now, this is the second spirit that animates the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. No room here for pride; the alms are collected secretly in the conferences, the great mount

alone being known to any one; set speeches are inadmissible; eulogies and encomiums are out of place; there is no such thing as figuring in public on the part of the members; the individual and his name are lost in the body. The good is neither hidden nor secret; but it is stripped of all the trappings of pride and placed under the guardianship of humility.

In fine, a third spirit that animates the society of St. Vincent de Paul, is the spirit of action. It was the reproach of inertness that erected the first conference of Paris. "Christianity is dead," it was said, "you boast of being Catholics, and what do you do? where are the works that exhibit your faith, and recommend it to our respect and submission?" Then it was that eight young Catholics exclaimed: Well then! let us go to work!

The society of St. Vincent de Paul is therefore essentially a society of action, of works, of prayers. It advances towards its end; it acts within its own proper means; these very means are acts; meetings, visits to the poor, almsgiving. And, in truth, my brethren, the Charity that does not act when it can act, is not charity; it is not the angel that consoles, but a cruel genius that mocks. It is therefore by its works that charity is known, as you would judge of the heat of a fire by the brightness and the height of its flames; and works of charity are inspired and nourished by God alone; *Deus charitas est: God is Charity!*

When Ozanam and his companions held their first conference, under the protection of St. Vincent de Paul, that apostle of active charity, they were surrounded by four classes of men, devoted, it was said, to the discovery of the highest happiness of humanity: the Materialists, the Deists, the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierites. The Materialists and the Deists, are simply and solely propounders of false doctrines; and thus it is that they have been able to do nothing beyond demolishing, in the souls of others, convictions, dear both to reason and to faith. And, in as much as morals depend on dogma, practice on theory, as the consequence depends on the principle, in practice, also, instead of edifying, they have demolished; they have not remedied evil, they have destroyed good; and yet good is the aliment of man's happiness.

The Saint-Simonians and the Fourierites profess to act effectively for the highest good of humanity. "We are

elaborating, said one of them, a friend of Ozanam's, " we are elaborating ideas and a system which will reform the world, and rid it for ever of misery. We shall do more in an instant, for humanity than you could accomplish in many centuries. "

A few years later, Ozanam was enabled to say to the brethren of Florence, in accents of compassionate friendship : " You are aware, gentlemen, of the result of the theories that deluded my poor friend. " You know it yourselves, my brethren. The Saint-Simonians and the Fourierites aimed at progress, not an indefinite, nor an ideal progress ; for indefinite progress and ideal progress are very possible, here below, and very real. They consist in fact, in a closer and closer apprehension of truth and of good. And so long as the intellect and the heart of man do not possess the infinite, they will ever seek to advance, and will really ever advance ; unless they place and seek their progress or happiness where it is not ; but then, it is no longer an indefinite progress, an ideal progress : it is an imaginary progress.

The Saint-Simonians and the Fourierites, then, in search of an imaginary progress, did indeed elaborate systems and create associations or *phalansteries*. The associates lived together in the most perfect communion. What good has resulted from all this, for humanity ? The oldest community lived a few months at most, and the initiated, returned, covered with confusion, to the drama of real life.

At this moment there is no longer a single community of Fourierites in existence, not even in the classical land that saw the first of them spring up ; and there are more than four thousand conferences made to the likeness of the little conference of Paris. Not a single saint-Simonian, a single Fourierites, can be found ; and the brethren of Ozanam number one hundred thousand. The ephemeral, existence of the phalanstery is spoken of only in some special works, as matter for anecdote rather than history, as an extravagance rather than an idea ; and each day throughout the world more than two hundred and fifty thousand families, that is to say, more than a million of individuals, know, love and bless, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Ozanam's associates never spoke like the inventors of false systems ; but they acted. Nor did they ever cry out from the boards of a theatre, amidst the plaudits of eager

spectators: *I am a man ! and nothing that interests humanity is a matter of indifference to me ;*" but in their expansive charity they really and frankly embrace all men. Truly those acclamations of an infatuated crowd have never found an echo within the obscure dwellings of the wretched, nor has the poor man ever heard of the poet who sang so feelingly of his woes ; but he has seen the disciple of St. Vincent de Paul in his hovel, by his bed-side, and even by the grave in which his miseries are hidden for ever. I trust, my brethren, that you now see the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in its true light : its ends, its means, its members, its organisation, the spirit that animates it.

Oh ! when we take in, in one comprehensive glance, this vast host of well-doers, pressing forward its irresistible battalions throughout all parts of the world ; its leaders ; its noble banner fluttering in the genial breeze of charity, in the midst of enemies and the tribulations of war, one is animated, inspired, charmed, like the prophet of old, when from the mountain-top he viewed, with delight, the tents of Israel encamped in multitudes upon the plain. O army of the faith ! noble soldiers, banded together in the glorious cause of Charity ! the order and discipline maintained in your ranks, and above all, the perfume of your charity that ascends in incense to Heaven, transport us with admiration. Who could refrain from blessing you with the prophet ! Yes glorious society, we bless thee from this moment ! To-morrow we shall see you at your work, we shall trace your foot-steps in the blessings you lavish on your members, on the poor, on humanity.

THIRD DISCOURSE.

Filii mei, non diligamus verbo, neque
lingua sed opere et veritate.

My little children, let us not love in
word, nor in tongue, but in deed and
in truth.

St. John, 1 Ep. Cap. III. v. 18.

I.

My Lord,

Having seen the origin and the development of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, its constitution, its interior life ; in order to complete this rapid survey, we have still to consider the good it does : first to its members, then to the poor and to society in general.

This good, as we may judge by the essential characteristics of the association, has for its final objects, the persecution, the propagation, and the honour of the Catholic faith. But in as much as faith, as St. Vincent de Paul tells us, is the aliment of justice, that is to say, the plenitude of every virtue ; and as it is impossible but that each means, each action of the society, should immediately engender good, under every variety of form, we will examine, without distinction, the divers fruits that grow, as it were by enchantment, out of the soil, watered by the sweat of christian charity.

The grace of God, say the Holy Scriptures, assumes an infinite variety of forms ; *multiformis gratia Dei*. In truth, this grace or the favor of God presents itself in the gifts of nature ; such as genius, talent, the precious qualities of the mind and the heart ; in the perfection and health of the body ; in the things which the paternal hand of God has supplied for our wants, our tastes, our legitimate affections ; in the benevolence, the charity of our fellow-beings : for we must not forget it, my brethren, this generosity comes in the first place from God. Grace exhibits

itself to us chiefly in those supernatural gifts which Jesus Christ so ardently wishes us to appreciate. The sun of grace pours its rays upon all human beings and it is effectual with all who do not harden their hearts against it.

Nevertheless, in the order of grace as in the order of nature, in the world as in eternity, there are privileged spots where heaven is more propitious, the atmosphere more favorable to life, the dew more beneficent, the soil more fertile, the harvest more bounteous.

Now, I believe it to be thus, my brethren, in the domain of faith, and practical charity selected by the eight students of Paris, and within which the great Society of St. Vincent de Paul continues to live and move.

I said that there, heaven is more propitious, God himself, we have his own word for it, is present in the midst of those who are assembled, associated in his name; and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, is founded in the name of Faith, in the name of Charity, which is God; *Deus charitas est*: God is Charity. Hence, God is in the very heart of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, supplying every member of that vast moral body with life and motion. Blessed is he, and blessed according to God's own heart, who taketh thought for the poor, who makes poverty his study, who gives a willing ear to the tale of misery, who is ever ready to give, who does not weary in doing good. Happier still those whose task it is to nourish, to propagate and to glorify the Faith; who are, in their own way, the evangelists of peace, the evangelists of good. Now, are not these the special characteristics of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; and is it not, therefore, entitled to expect from the munificent bounty of God, the special graces he has promised?

The Church, dispensatrix of the treasures of Heaven itself, has poured them forth profusely on this Society, on each of its members, on each of its works. Again and again, she lovingly reiterates her first blessings. The Sovereign Pontiffs have bestowed upon it their most signal favours; and this day again, he who blessed it in its cradle, in our own land, is now about to raise his beneficent hand, enriched with the treasures of the Church, in order to invoke upon that Society, grown up into vigorous manhood, upon those who love it, and upon you all, my brethren, the choicest benedictions of Heaven.

Here also the atmosphere is more favorable to life; its

elements more pure and sympathetic. On this soil of charity there are none of those distinctions that chill and divide, no hoarse tempests, no fierce struggles of contending interests : all tumult is hushed in the unity of faith, and there his nought to rob the ear of the ravishing harmonies of charity. " On entering our peaceful conference," said Ozanam to the brethren of Paris, in 1848, " all political passions are forgotten ; here, for once, we meet not in contention, not for mutual distinction, but to hear one another and to regard one another in the better traits of our nature, and for divers matters of charity, calculated by their very nature, to sooth for the moment, all feelings of irritation, and to obliterate all heart burnings.

Oh ! how grateful must it not be to all to be there, my brethren, were it but as the traveller who rests his weary limbs for a moment in some oasis of the desert, or as the worn-out combatant who snatches a precious hour of rest in the intervals of battle.

Allow me then to transport you thither in thought for an instant. Let us enter together one of those little conferences, which are held every hour in some part or other of the world, and daily in some part or other of our good city. At the appointed hour, the brethren assemble ; it may be that they are not numerous, but you will find them of every age and of almost every condition in life. They recognise and salute one another, for in the eyes of charity, they know they are friends, they are equals, they are brothers. They take their places without distinction of any kind on the benches used by the children of the school or the catechism class : the old man seats himself beside the youth ; the rich trader, the man of wealth and position, beside the struggling citizen, whose daily toil hardly keeps him above want. The president who is often but one of the youngest members, for the domain of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is the patrimony of youth,—opens the conference with the usual invocation to the Holy Ghost. Then a member commences an edifying lecture, having for its subject as far as possible, faith or charity. After the lecture, each member in turn communicates to his assembled brethren, his burden of intelligence, interesting to a disciple of St. Vincent de Paul. He has, it may be, to tell of the extreme destitution of some poor family, of the courage, the resignation, at times also, unhappily, of despair, accompanying misfortune ; of the death, of some poor client, of the return of another to his

religious duties. Each member then contributes according to his means, in secrecy, to the common purse the alms that are to gladden the hearts of the poor. The conference concludes with two invocations for itself and one for the benefactors of the poor. Then, all unite in the touching prayer we have twice repeated together.

Then it is, my brethren, that the soul has had time to breathe at ease, and all separate edified and better disposed for good, and strengthened against evil.

Union is strength ! The proverb is as true in the moral as it is in the physical order. What is more, nature demands that we should assist one another in our souls more than in our bodies, for the reciprocal action of the former is far greater and more varied. Moral union combines the force of example, of speech, of counsel, of exhortation, of authority. Union is strength, in all the virtues, in faith as well as in charity. Union furnishes strength to destroy evil, to effect good purposes, to overcome the greatest obstacles.

Above all, union furnishes strength to overcome that cowardly enemy of virtue that never attacks a man but when he is alone: *human respect*. Referring one day to the period of the first establishment of the association, Ozanam said : " There was then but very little religion in Paris ; and young men, even those who were Christians, had not the courage to go to Mass, because they were pointed at as hypocrites, and people said they made a pretence of piety in order to obtain advancement or place. To-day this is no longer the case. And, thank God, we can truly say, that the wisest and the most learned, are also the most religious of our youth. I am convinced that this result is, in great part, due to our society ; and in this sense it may be said, that it has glorified God in its works. "

Thank God, my brethren, on this soil still moist with the blood of our martyrs, in this atmosphere still fragrant with the Catholic virtues of our fathers, the hideous phantom of impiety, with its feet of clay and its brow singularly stamped with ignorance, pride, and disdain, has never seduced the enlightened and sincere Christian from a faithful compliance with his duties. True it is that, from time to time, some silly mimics have essayed to strut the boards, before a deserted house, playing like children with the broken fragments of the sceptre of Voltaire, and wreathing their harmless brows with the withered flowers of his crown.

But the role of the great play-king has been played-out, and the feeble attempts of his imprudent imitators, have never been fostered by the breath of applause.

Nevertheless, my brethren, here as elsewhere, virtue is ever a warfare. Here as elsewhere, human respect bears a certain sway. Virtue when it is isolated, is ever timid, fearful, diffident ; a look, a word, a harmless jest, suffice to raise its fears ; its very isolation is for it a cause of terror. In the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, virtue is not alone : it combats under the protection of a hero. True that hero is a saint ; but a saint to whom in the fatal days of 1793. it was proposed to erect a statue as to the greatest benefactor of humanity ; a saint to whom, as Ozanam said, " impiety itself, in return for all he had done for humanity, had forgiven the crime of having loved God." It marches in the footsteps of Ozanam and his companions, whose name and whose courage, recall at once the glory and the generosity of faith ; it marches mid the serried ranks of soldiers of every age and of every condition, beneath the folds of a banner, adorned with that motto honoured and respected in every age and even when corruption reigned supreme : *For the good of humanity.*

It is good, my brethren, to meet the poor on the high way, better to meet them at one's door, better still to receive them within one's own house. Ozanam did this, and gave them the place of honor as his distinguished guests.

Nevertheless, if this be all you have seen of the poor, believe me, poverty, that bosom friend of so many unfortunate human beings, has never fully opened its heart to you, nor enriched your soul with its choicest favours. Society is like any other friend : its visits and its affection must need be returned ; its attentions must be reciprocated. He who is exempt from poverty has other woes of his own ; and where this interchange of kind offices exists, I maintain, with Ozanam, " that by visiting the poor, we gain more than they do, for the sight of their sufferings will serve to make us better. We shall then feel for those children of misfortune, a sentiment of gratitude, that must soon ripen into love. Many and many a time, when overwhelmed with mental suffering and the anxiety caused by my declining health, had I entered, with a sad heart, the dwelling of some poor family confided to my care ; there, the sight of wretchedness to which my own sufferings were but a trifle, made me ashamed of my discouragement.

I felt myself inspired with new strength to bear my grief, and my heart overflowed with gratitude, to the afflicted beings the sight of whose miseries had afforded me so much courage and consolation. And henceforward how could I help loving them with an increased affection ? ”

On entering the poor man's dwelling, Ozanam invariably uncovered his head and gave them that affectionate salutation which he so loved to give. “ At your service. ” I believe that all his companions do the same. But the poor man, as you are aware, my brethren, has also his own mode of salutation, and who shall tell of the good thoughts, the good desires, the good wishes he pours forth from the treasury of his heart in behalf of the rich man who seeks him out to do him good. How often, in the poor man's family, as in that of Jacob, have they thought of sharing with their consoling angel the only riches they possess ; their love and their prayers ! Now, my brethren, whatever may be the value of the rich man's prayers, I think those of the poor are better still. Lacordaire somewhere says : “ If you wish to know what is passing in the heart of God, listen to the beatings of your own. ” Well ! there is not perhaps a man in the world, who would not feel better disposed towards another, even were that other man his enemy, were some poor wretch, exhibiting the loaf that nourished him and the cloak that sheltered him from the blast to exclaim : that man is my benefactor. Why then should not the heart of God experience a like emotion ? Yes, and in a far higher degree, he himself expressly said that the poor are his members, and he considers as done to himself, whatever is done for them. Happy then, my brethren, happy he who taketh thought for the poor : God will deliver him in the evil day.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, behold your share of the rich harvest it promises. The blessing of God, the blessing of the Church, the blessing of fraternal charity, the blessing of the poor. You have indeed chosen the better part ; and it shall not be taken from you, because these are the riches that neither thieves, nor rust can reach.

II.

Let us now follow the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to the dwellings of the poor.

When the brethren go to visit the poor, they find mem-

selves face to face with two species of misery, the material and the moral. To make them known to you, my brethren—I will neither draw on your imagination nor on the memory of your heart; but I will invite you to follow in thought this double misery, not in one of those foreign countries where war or famine reigns, but in the heart of our good city of Quebec, for instance in some of the streets of our suburbs: St. John, St. Roch, St. Sauveur. Let us enter one of those wretched dwellings. The door will only half shut; on all sides are large chinks through which the storm passes; the stove is cold; there is not always even black bread on the table; the children are suffering and sick, but there is no means of relief at hand; and the mother concentrates within her heart the grief of all. Put at the head of this family, sometimes a father who is a debauched drunkard, and you have all the parts of the real scene.

Once more, I do no exaggerate: I do not even attempt a picture of the painful reality; I only mention it. I speak of what I have seen, what others have seen lately, and what any one may see at ten steps from his own well furnished and well warmed rooms. Oh! what singular indifference is our; we say to ourselves, returning from a visit to this poor dwelling! Man suffers unrelieved beside his fellow-man; Lazarus is still writhing in agony at the gate of the rich Israelite, the Christian at the door of his fellow-Christian.

This is not all. Within a house, close in front of which the tide of a heedless population incessantly ebbs and flows, and perhaps in an appartement still bearing faint traces of by-gone splendour, or in a dark corner of some damp cellar with its single pane closely shaded to exclude the faint gleams of light, a woman is seated; with both hands she hides her wasted cheeks furrowed with long weeping. She is deeply agitated, and there is evidently going on within her a fierce struggle between the pangs of poverty and the degradation of beggary.

Such is the true picture of what men sometimes heedlessly call shamefaced poverty. That woman could give with a far better grace than she could ask: she knows by experience the truth of Our Lord's words, *it is sweeter to give than to receive*. So much for material poverty.

Why is it, my brethren, that material poverty and moral poverty, though not sisters, should be nevertheless so

intimate? Why is it that the poor make an abuse of poverty itself; that the being who is disinherited by his mother earth does not always appeal to the justice and to the generosity of Heaven? Why are the poor wicked? Real poverty is nevertheless a grace, which renders salvation and, therefore, virtue more easy, as we learn from the testimony of Christ himself. This is true, no doubt, my brethren, but let us remember that every grace is liable to abuse; and that the greater the grace, the more culpable the abuse. Wealth is also a grace, though inferior to the grace of poverty, and the rich man abuses it. It remains to be seen, my brethren, whether the poor man in his ignorance exasperation, and guilt, pushes his malice to the same degree of refinement as the rich man reaches in his; and whether the conversion that effaces all, is not more frequent among the poor than among their brethren enslaved by wealth.

However this may be, the moral, as well as the material misery of the poor are ever but too great. And this is a further reason to urge us to seek a remedy for both alike. For I take it for granted that no Christian will admit that it is right to give way before evil, or to refuse an alms to a hungry fellow-being, however vicious he may be. We every one of us agree with Ozanam, "that you must never drive men to despair, and that one has no right to refuse a piece of bread to the vilest criminal on earth." There is but one exception, namely, when, without inflicting any excessive suffering on the poor themselves, the refusal of an alms is calculated bring about a moral improvement. And this one exception is itself prompted by charity: it is the charity of the body giving way to the charity of the soul.

But even then, we cannot divest ourselves of charity, we have not performed our duty to the poor man, by a prompt refusal of aid, we must still have our eyes on him, to mark the result, as a good physician watches the effects of his medicine.

But then, my brethren, what, I ask you, can the isolated charity of individuals, indifferent as we find it in some, and ardent, this it may be, in others, accomplish, in the face of this double wretchedness: that of the soul and that of the body? In order to relieve this wretchedness you must know it; but this knowledge cannot be obtained by meeting the poor in the highway, they must be in their own houses.

Now, who is to do this, if not he who has in advance formally undertaken it as a special duty, appointed a time for his visit, and who, under the charitable eye of a fellow labourer, is guarded against the indifference and inconstancy so natural to the human heart? Who will treat this ever running sore of poverty with the resources and the constancy of the associate, for whom charity is a career? Who is to take charge of the child who is too poor to go to school, belonging to a family, not a member of which is able to read, and in which the most sacred duties are either unknown or forgotten? who is to send that poor child to a christian school, who is to clothe him, who is to lead him by the hand until he is old enough to begin an apprenticeship or labour for his own maintenance? who is to take in hands the youthful apprentice, and watch over him with the vigilant and assiduous charity he needs so much? who is to provide him with good books? who will entice him to that charitable association calculated to afford a vent to the energy of his buoyant youth, where his virtue shall be placed under the safeguard of charity? Who will penetrate the secret of the poor who are still "ashamed to beg?" To whom but to a disciple of St. Vincent de Paul will the poor victims of want and misfortune, who dread even the eye of indifference, open their hearts with freedom? who will apply a moral remedy to a moral evil: good advice, exhortation, prayer, unless he whose profession it is to devote himself assiduously to the poor, and who has already gained their hearts and acquired in some sort a beneficent right to correct them? Do you fancy for a moment, my brethren, that the diseased soul of the poor man will yield to the isolated, fluctuating and heartless mite thrown to him by a mercenary hand?

In fact, without that union which is strength, an appointed and, well calculated means, a strong organisation, a provision of charity, in fine, a charitable crusade, you can never encounter the multiplied and powerful enemies of man's happiness, whether physical or moral, with the certainty of victory.

But, in this way we can accomplish every thing. Oh! would it were possible to sum up all the alms, both material and spiritual, all the good effected by the hundred thousand disciples of St. Vincent de Paul, amongst the million of poor, the thousands of children, of apprentices, of artisans, that have succeeded one another since the society commenced

its beneficent work, as man succeeds man! The calculation would, in truth, be vast, the enumeration endless.

A glance at any one of the monthly reports of the society will afford a slight idea of the truth. Among the thousand facts therein related, and supported by unquestionable testimonies, you will read of men, of whole families saved from destitution; of several associates uniting to repair with the labour of their own hands the ruined dwelling of the poor, a spectacle which has several times been witnessed in Quebec; of appeals made to the rich, in periods of distress; of innocence snatched from the countless snares the demon is ever setting for its destruction. I shall cite but a single incident taken at random from the bulletin of the society.

A family in Dunkerque had been visited by a conference during three years or there about. Not a single encouraging symptom had resulted. The father would continually, by an adroit diversion, exclude all reference to matters of religion. The mother even, exhibited that indifference of which Jesus Christ seems to despair of in the Gospel. Many a time, when leaving the cellar that held this wretched family, the visitors despaired of ever succeeding in their benevolent efforts. However, the father who was suffering from a cancer in the foot, had for some time been in the habit of invoking the intercession of the Blessed Virgin in the hope of being restored to health. A physician, who was an honorary member of the association, conceived the happy thought of making him a few visits. On one of these occasions he said to the sufferer; "My good friend, God is merciful, and I feel convinced, that if you were to return to him with a sincere heart, he would cure you. Be it so, then," exclaimed the patient in a tone of energetic determination, "I will go to confession." He kept his word, and thanks to the special mercy Almighty God affords even to our very weakness, the remedies which had for so many years been administered fruitlessly, now produced their effect, and the father of this unfortunate household was restored to perfect health. The whole family, as was naturally to be expected, soon followed the edifying example of its head.

III.

The blessings which the society of St. Vincent de Paul showers upon the individual and upon the family, are diffused abroad upon human society in general : for society is not in reality a matter apart from the individuals of whom it is composed. The good done to any portion, interest therefore the whole of the society, and re-acts with benign influences for the well being of the great social body.

But, on the other hand, from the disease that attacks partially any individual member, there spring forth diseases that soon afflict the whole body : social diseases. Then the whole of society languishes and suffers ; it is seized with a general restlessness and fever that spread themselves everywhere and yet have their seat nowhere. Sometimes it is seized with frightful convulsions that presage its restoration to a healthy life, or its final destruction.

These great social maladies spring from three sources : from material misery, from moral misery, and from the antagonism of the social elements which is but the result of the other two combined.

Let us examine, consecutively and in detail, each of those three social evils, that by an exact knowledge of the danger, we may be able to point out that sure and efficacious remedy which such a danger demands.

Material poverty. In a social aspect, the evil of poverty becomes a vast and hideous sore. We sometimes hear it called *pauperism*. I detest the expression ; it savours of ambition, it exhibits the frigid accuracy of science rather than the picture of a bleeding wound. Let it pass, however, for the name is of little moment after all. But those who look upon poverty either as a social cancer, that must yield to resources of art, or as a problem which true science has declared itself powerless to solve, are mistaken as to the real essence of the matter.

Pauperism is neither a cancer nor a problem, as they fancy. In the order of nature, since the first sin, poverty is a necessary consequence of the diversity, and variety of the talents, capacity, qualities, defects, and even of the chances, that Providence distributes at will. Man must serve man, and be served by man ; and without the promptings of want, the painful but indispensable task of social service would never be carried out. In the supernatural order, pauperism is neither a cancer nor a problem ; it is a grace,

it is a gratuitous favour, a gift from God : a grace for the individual and for society. Poverty of spirit, genuine detachment from riches, is a grace, a precious, a necessary virtue. But real poverty, the privation of the gifts of fortune, is also a grace, which is occasionally superadded to the former, and which facilitates poverty of spirit, gives a free scope to virtue, and a greater assurance of salvation. It is a grace which brings men into closer proximity with Jesus Christ ; and I believe that among the close followers of Jesus Christ, there will ever be men who shall not have whereon to lay their heads : for God never leaves his grace unemployed ; and Jesus Christ loves to share the particles of his cross.

Pauperism is therefore a permanent effect of the sovereign will of God. Hence, to attempt its utter extirpation is not merely a utopian scheme, it is a crime.

But does it follow from this, that we cannot mitigate its horrors ? Undoubtedly not. It is in our power, nay it is our duty, to pour oil upon this wound, in order to prevent it from festering and proving fatal to the sufferer ; for Almighty God, in all the dispositions of his Providence, in all his corrections, in all his paternal favours, has counted upon the charity and fraternal affection of every one of his children.

But in human society as in the individual, the worst evils are moral evils. So long as the soul remains good, the principle of strength acts, and acts effectually for good : the power of the soul, corrects and controls the inferior nature ; it is in fact the wealth of the poor. But where the soul is corrupt, the whole man falls into corruption and degradation, and his fortunes above all. It is therefore a very short sighted policy to neglect the moral regeneration of man, in order to labour at the amelioration of his physical condition ; still more unwise to sacrifice the one to the other : to place the necessity of wealth above the necessity of the knowledge and love of God ; man's fickle self-interest, above every sacred principle ; industry above morality and religion.

The moral miseries of the poor classes of society are traceable chiefly to ignorance, the parent of error ; and to the neglect of religion : the sole moral wealth of the poor.

Ozanam somewhere says that the spirit of the conference of St. Vincent de Paul is specially requisite in countries where the Church is actually militant. Now, in our days, where is the land in which this is not the case ? In

our own country, have we with nothing to fear, nothing to struggle against? Alas! side by side with our Catholic religion, are living and growing up numerous foreign sects, whose principles, views, tastes and affections, flatter nature and restrict faith: a dangerous mingling of the tares and the good grain in the field of the husbandman.

But this is not the time to mote this dangerous wound, there is another which is daily assuming more alarming proportions, and which more especially calls for the efficacious intervention of our organised charity.

In the suburbs of our city, in the very midst of our poor and suffering fellow-Catholics, the salaried emissaries of an impious sect have made themselves a den. Like their master, referred to by St. Peter, they come forth often during the night, to prowl like wolves around the sheepfold of the good shepherd; not unfrequently too, during the day, for now, Judas has lost his sense of shame, he no longer casts away from him the filthy bribe of the synagogue, *he feeds on it!* The thought of his apostacy no longer overwhelms him with horror; Judas of our day does not hang himself in despair, *he openly looks about for other apostates.*

The evil is perhaps greater than you think. Individuals, whole families have yielded to the seductions of the fallen angel. Yes, Canadian families, Catholic families, have already sold their consciences, their honour and their faith and enrolled themselves in some of the thousand and one sects, with all the fanaticism of your new apostate.

My brethren, I promised to point out the whole evil before indicating the remedy. But at the first sight of this peril, I cannot refrain from giving the alarm. The souls of our fellow-Canadians, our fellow Catholics, are losing the life of faith, thanks to their material indigence. These souls do not go through a process of enlightenment, nor of direction, but one of deception; they are only being bought and sold. The wolves are active and vigilant. We need a crusade, we need disciples of St. Vincent de Paul; we need a phalanx of enlightened, fearless, fervent apostles, but they must be lay men, whose name and whose habit have never been execrated by the father and by the children; prepared to bear relief to these unfortunates, in their comfortless homes, and thus to remove the temptation that is the cause of their ruin, to forestal the enemy, and by one blow, save

from destruction the father, the mother and the helpless children.

Antagonism between the social elements. The rich and the poor meet : God is the father of both alike, says a holy father. Yes they meet ; they meet in our houses, in our streets, in public places, on this same earth, and under the same sun. But God is the father of both alike : they are brothers ; this the rich man is not aware of, or feigns not to know ; but the poor man knows it well, and clings to this as a precious right. And when his eyes fall upon the rich man, he says within his heart : *that man is my brother.*

But the look of indifference and contempt he receives from his more fortunate brother, astounds him. And what, think you, are the thoughts that must then spring up within a soul already driven to desperation by want ? He must take the lowest place everywhere ; everywhere crowded back and disdained : in the last place in our houses, he compares his dry crust with the succulents joints upon his brother's table ; in the street, his tattered and threadbare rags, with the magnificent clothing, the rich and useless ornaments of the other ; on the public places he contrasts his own isolation or the contemptuous glances he receives, with the honours and triumphs of the rich. Oh ! what, think you, must then be the thoughts of his heart ? Has he not the heart of a man within his shrunken frame ? Does not that heart contain the latent seeds of envy, of hatred, of vengeance, of rage ? Doubtless, my brethren ; and hence it is that the rich and the poor meet also upon a neutral ground, face to face, and upon a field that places them upon an equality, not in charity but in brute force, and which drinks up impartially the blood of both alike.

Material misery, moral misery, and the antagonism between the wealthy classes and the poor : such are the three great wounds that are ever exhausting the generous life-blood of our great human society.

Now, my brethren, for social maladies, isolated remedies are insufficient ; for it is utterly impossible that the effect should be more potent than the cause. When a whole class is suffering, it is by a class that it must be relieved ; and in order that this difficult object may be effectually carried out, there must be a common organisation of the whole body. Charity, like self interest, properly understood, becomes the pursuit of a life time. I speak there of organised charity, not of self-interest : charity that gives,

that compassionates, that suffers, that bears cold, that bears hunger, that weeps, *benign* charity. In presence of the evils which naturally afflict one portion of society, disinherited of all earthly wealth, we need a class that will give without receiving any return, who will invest their capital for heaven alone. A charity persistent as fell-disease ; strong as death, or rather as God himself, who is its principle ; a charity whose energy is derived from a faith in Eternity : for this alone can make it endure and hold out to the very end.

Ozanam said the same to his brethren : " Purely philanthropic associations do not possess the same elements of strength or of durability, because they are based upon human interests alone. You see them pour forth money but there is no heart in the gift. The charity that mingles its tears with the tears of the wretched whom it cannot otherwise console, that gathers up and caresses the naked and abandoned infant, that seeks out the young and timid to enrich them with friendly counsel, that seats itself lovingly by the bed-side of the sick, that listens unwearied to the long and plaintive tale of the wretched... that charity, my friends, can be inspired by God alone. "

And again, my brethren, a spirit which is not that of Catholic charity has invented, as a remedy for the evils of society, a tax for the support of the poor. A tax ! how chillingly does not the word fall upon the ear of the rich and the poor ? O Christ ! source of burning charity this chilling thought was never inspired by you. A tax for the poor ! But by what right, in the first place, does the public officer demand of me, and compel me to contribute in the name of Justice what I owe to charity alone ? A tax for the poor ! But, where it has been adopted, does it obviate the scourge of poverty, does it prevent the poor from dying of hunger ? Does it do away with misery ? *No : it hides it, it screens it, it stifles its cries.* How is it that in certain countries where all interests boast of being represented in public, the supreme interest of the poor is proscribed, and the poor themselves forced to seek concealment ? Why are they not allowed to exhibit to the compassionate eyes of those whom Providence may bring in their way, the gnawing evils that plead so eloquently for relief ? The poor tax ! But in dealing with the heart, it is utterly impotent and even fatal. How can the official who earns his own bread by distributing the bread of others, find the time, the

thought, the courage, the grace, to afford the poor whom he relieves, the counsel, or the reprimand calculated to enlighten the soul, or to heal its evils? every thing about your public official, is hard and chilling: his look, his tone, his heart, are cold as the coin he changes. This is but nature, in fact, it is almost a necessity: Now the heart alone, inflamed with charity, can do good to the soul of another; it is not the body that communes with the soul of its fellow-man; that influences it; that changes it; it is the soul: God looks to the heart: it is the heart that moves Him; and it is with man also, and with the poor man, quite as much as with the rich.

How insufficient are all human means, for the healing of man's evils! Ye champions of the systems invented by human reason that loses itself in error when once its ceases to be illumined by the light of faith, and of which deception itself is a radical vice; of philanthropic societies, all tainted with self-interest; of taxes for the support of the poor, be frank for once, and acknowledge the impotence of your efforts.

Soul of Ozanam, genius of St. Vincent de Paul, spirit of God, hover over us in the abyss of our miseries. To the very principle of all strength itself we must look for a remedy in our utter feebleness and frailty.

My brethren, my task is ended, and yours now commences, I have endeavoured to make the society of St. Vincent de Paul better known, and to win for it your love. If I have succeeded, permit me, ere we part, to give you as a practical fruit and remembrance of our three days intercourse, a single thought, a single word: *action*. In the name of Jesus Christ and of his suffering members, I leave it to all my brethren of that dear society, and to those whom the grace of God has gathered around the pulpit during the Triduum, now about to close; and to all I repeat again: *action*. I dwell upon the word, for without works reducing to action our ideas, the very remembrance of them dies; and I would urge it upon each and every one of you, my brethren; for when an effort is required from all, every individual should answer rapidly to the call.

Young men; my last thought is due to you, in more respects than one. My last words shall be an appeal to your Catholic faith, to your charity, to your courage, to your generosity, to your burning energy for good. And here, I cannot more aptly express myself than in the words

of one who loved you much, and from whom they were elicited by the spectacle of the active charity of the youths who have preceeded you in the same career : " Charity is admirable at all times and by whomsoever it may be practised ; it is admirable in the man of mature age, who snatches an hour from business in behalf of his suffering fellow-man : it is admirable in the mother, who sacrifices, for a brief space, the happiness of loving and being loved, in order to be the bearer of love, to those who have long known of it but the name ; it is admirable in the poor-man, who still finds where withal to console and relieve a poorer than himself ; but it is in the young man that it exhibits itself in all its fulness, such as God sees it in himself in the spring time of His eternity, such as Jesus saw it in the day of his pilgrimage, on the brow of St. John." (*)

My Lord, we do not forget that God alone gives the increase in every field ; and imparts to all beings their life and activity. Kneeling prostrated, all together, in the temple of prayer, we await from Him alone, the graces He has deposited in your hands. Impart to us, then, the blessings of heaven. Bless the seed of the World. Bless these souls in whom it has found a fertile soil. Bless the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. Impart to all its members the love and zeal of the Faith, the resistless ardour of charity. Cherished in the hearts of ardent apostles, that blessing will bear to the suffering members of Jesus-Christ, the good tidings that sooth every grief. It will penetrate the home of the wretched, it will wipe away tears, pour balm upon wounds, appease the cravings of hunger and thirst, and impart warmth and covering to shivering nakedness. Send it forth to console the widow, to gather up and shelter the orphan, to protect the tradesman, and visit the workman who wants a friend ; to heal the wounded soul and enlighten the mind and the heart of the indigent, and soften the heart of the rich. Let it go forth to reconcile God's children and unite them in mutual love for time and for eternity. *Filioli mei, non diligamus verbo, neque lingua, sed opere et veritate.*

(*) Lacordaire. Biographie d'Ozanam.

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